"It is often said - by Catholics as well as Protestants - that the Church of the Renaissance was crying out for reform with its abuse of indulgences, its sale of Church offices, the laughable mass market for false relics, the nepotism that appointed children as cardinals, the low standard of morality and education for much of the clergy, and so on. All that might be true, but it is also possible to exaggerate the Church's corruption and to neglect to mention its unchanging orthodoxy, its care for the sick and the poor, its leadership of Europe, its restraint on government power, and its patronage of the arts and learning." (Crocker)

"Most of all, as we see with Luther, we need to remember that it was not the Catholic Church of the Renaissance that freely forgave adultery and murder, let alone a hundred times, merely on the grounds that the sinner was a professed Christian. Whatever the shameful traffic in indulgences to raise money for the Church, at a minimum even the purchaser of an indulgence had to confess these crimes against man and God to a priest. The indulgence only relieved him of the otherwise obligatory penance." (Crocker)

While certain abuses have occurred in the Catholic Church, such abuses cannot be a justification for the overthrow of the Church any more than Judas' betrayal of Jesus justifies apostasy from Jesus. Further, it may be argued that the rebellion against the Catholic Church had less to do with abuses but was rather motivated by greed and the desire to do whatever one wanted (e.g. to throw off the restraint of authority) - those who fought the Church often despoiled her of her possessions and pursued sinful lifestyles (even Erasmus considered that the revolt had 'but two objects at heart,' 'money and women'). Why is it Protestants complain about how Catholics have acted, but ignore how Protestants have acted? Why is it that they complain about some bloodshed in her past, but not see the great bloodshed that the Protestant Rebellion is responsible for? When condemning the Catholic Church for certain abuses of her members, why not (1) compare her many outstanding fruits throughout the ages with the many bitter fruits of Protestantism, and (2) compare her fruits to what would have occurred without her.

* Does it not trouble you that the Protestant Revolt essentially places the theology of a single, unbalanced man like Luther against many centuries of Christian teaching? Do you really believe that all those Christians for hundreds of years misunderstood what Christ taught - even those who knew the apostles? Those who were martyred? All those highly intellectual and spiritual persons over many hundreds of years? But now, suddenly, Luther grasped what "true Christianity" was? How could Christ allow so many generations - in fact, most of Christianity - to remain in the dark? How could Christ allow this even despite His promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church (cf. Mt. 16:18)? Why would Christ pick a troubled man like Luther to correct this supposed error? And how do you suppose Luther acquired this knowledge? Does it not trouble you that Luther admits he had discussions with the devil? Do you really consider Luther to be infallible? Did you know that Luther himself had misgivings about his actions?

"Luther's advocates might, if their eyes are not filmed, read with profit the following words which their master penned when he had genuine misgivings at the outset of his apostasy. 'How many times,' he writes, 'have I not asked myself with bitterness the same question which the Papists put me: Art thou alone wise? Darest thou imagine that all mankind have been in error for so long a series of years? ***I am not so bold as to assert that I have been guided in this affair by God. How will it be, if, after all, it is thou thyself who art wrong, and art thou involving in error so many souls who will then be eternally damned?***' (Latin Works, Weim. ed., 8, p. 411 seq.).'" (Msgr. O'Hare) (emphasis added)

In conclusion, we ask you to consider (1) whether your 'church' really could be true, and (2) what the consequences might be of adhering to a false 'church'. To this end, please:

* Look critically at how your 'church' was formed and by who (it really does matter!)

* Consider carefully how it is impossible for a true religion to be invented by mere men. Clearly, the true Church must begin with Christ.

* Look critically and objectively at the entire history of your 'church' (do not just consider documents put forward by your denomination).

* Look critically at the basic tenets of your faith. Consider how well they compare with biblical instructions, as well as what evil consequences they may lead to. Consider whether all members of your 'church' assent to these tenets and whether they have always held the same tenets or if they have changed over time.

* Using Scripture, carefully consider which looks more like Christ's church. Is your 'church' unified? Is it under one shepherd?

* Compare the historical evidence against your 'church - do your 'church's' teachings agree with those of Apostolic times? Do you have merely claims that your 'church' existed since the time of the apostles or do you have concrete *proof*?

* Consider your views on the role of the Catholic Church throughout history as well as her claim to be the one true Church. How can it be that she apostatized in light of Christ's promise (Mt. 16:18)? How is it that she can prove that her doctrines trace back to apostolic times if she has apostatized? How can you say she has apostatized but you still accept her Bible, her doctrines (e.g. the Trinity), her holidays (e.g. Easter, Christmas)? Why can she show you ancient bibles, ancient churches, ancient documents, accounts of ancient martyrdoms, relics of the apostles...? Why is it that she has the martyrs, the miracles, the virgins? If you have been told evil things about the Catholic Church, who have you learned them from? Do you know what the Church's explanation is? Do you hold the mistakes of certain persons against the Church as a whole? If so, then where do you put the blame for Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, the other apostles' abandonment of Jesus - on the individuals or on Jesus' Church?

Do not be surprised if "the more you honestly and objectively examine your non-Catholic faith, the more you become convinced that it's false." Remember, you have a duty get all the facts and that those who reject the one and only Church established by Christ are rejecting Christ himself (cf. Lk. 10:16). Truly, the Catholic Church "is not just one church among others - it is the one and only TRUE church among many false 'churches'."

"The Catholic Church was recognized by the whole Christian world as the true Church of God for fifteen consecutive centuries. No man can halt at the end of those 1,500 years and say that the Catholic Church is not the Church of Christ without embarrassing himself seriously." (Catholic Convert, Former Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli)

"The Catholic Church herself is an historic fact. Like a great mountain-range she bestrides the history of the past two thousand years. Whatever may be the attitude adopted towards her, it is impossible to escape her." (Pope Pius XII)

"Christ, speaking of the mystical edifice, mentions only one Church, which he calls His own - 'I will build my church;' any other Church except this one, since it has not been founded by Christ, cannot be the true Church." (Pope Leo XIII, "Satis Cognitum", 1896 A.D.)

This flier is based on a MyCatholicSource.com web page.

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Non-Catholic 'Christian' Challenge: Is Your Religion True?

"And if it be asked which of the many conflicting religions it is necessary to adopt, reason and the natural law unhesitatingly tell us to practice that one which God enjoins, and which men can easily recognize by certain exterior notes, whereby Divine Providence has willed that it should be distinguished, because, in a matter of such moment, the most terrible loss would be the consequence of error." (Pope Leo XIII, "Libertas Praestantissimum", 1888 A.D.)

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How Could Your Non-Catholic 'Christian' Religion Be True?

* See "Where was your 'church' when...?' flier (4-in-1 flier)

* See "Is your faith biblical?" flier (4-in-1 flier)

* See "Who founded your 'church'?" flier (4-in-1 flier)

* If your 'church' is true, why does it ultimately trace back to a heretic? How much you do really know about the 'founder' of your 'church'? If it is Luther, did you know that he has been considered "unbalanced", that he confessed to being "fervent in impurity", that he broke solemn vows to God, that he had discussions with the devil; that the devil approved of his doctrine?

* Where are your ancient bibles? Show us your first century bible manuscript. Show one from the year 500 or 600 or 700... Why is it you have none that the Catholic Church didn't produce?

* Why does your current version of the bible trace back to the Catholic Church if your 'church' is the true one?

* If you have no ancient bible manuscript, can you at least show an ancient record of having had one? If nothing is more important to you than Scripture, surely you would be able to show your 'church' had at least seen an ancient bible!

* If Scripture is so important to you, at least show us your ancient artwork. Remember that, historically, few persons could have ever read the bible so you would have needed to teach them via artwork. If you cannot show us your ancient artwork, what about your ancient literacy programs? Surely, if the bible is necessary for salvation, and your 'church' was there, you must have had some means to teach those persons (most of the populace!) about the bible? Remember, illustrations were the 'bible of the poor' in early Christianity. So, where exactly are your ancient illustrations? Why is it your 'church' has none, but the Catholic Church has many?

* Where are your relics of the apostles? Why is it the Catholic Church has them and your 'church' doesn't?

* Where are your relics of your ancient martyrs? Why is it the Catholic Church has them and your 'church' doesn't? In fact, simply name one specific martyr of your 'church' from the first century. Where exactly was your 'church' when our saints were being martyred right and left - for centuries - cruelly, brutally martyred ("the city was hitherto drunk with the blood of Christians")? Where exactly were you?

* Where are the ruins of your ancient churches? Show us your oldest 'church' building. Why do none of your 'worship' spaces date back more than a few hundred years?

* Why does your 'church' not follow the oral traditions that St. Paul indicated (see 2 Thes. 2:15)? Do you even know what they are?

* Why does your 'church' tolerate divorce, homosexuality, contraception, women 'ministers', etc., even though Scripture explicitly condemns this? How is it that your 'church' feels excused from Jesus' laws? That it has the power to change them?

* Where are all your miracles? Jesus said that his followers would work miracles (cf. Mk. 16:17), so show us historical accounts of these miracles in your 'church' throughout the past 2,000 years. The Catholic Church's history records countless, marvelous miracles. Where is your consistent history of miracles and the documentation to back it up?

* If your 'church' is the true one, produce some documents dating from A.D. 33 to A.D. 1500 if you can.

* If your 'church' is the true one, why are all your Protestant heroes fallen away / disobedient Catholics - Luther, Wyclif, etc.?

* Since Christ is head of only *one* Church - a Church He Himself founded on St. Peter (Mt. 16:18), the Catholic Church - that means He is *not* head of yours. How, then could your 'church', be true?

* Since Christ commissioned Peter to tend to his sheep (Jn. 21:15-17), and you admit you are not one of Peter's sheep, you admit you are not one of Christ's!

* "How can you claim to be the one true church when you're not even one church?"

* How can you claim to be the true 'church' when you can't even agree on doctrine and you have no infallible authority to settle the matter?

* If your 'church' is true, show us your line of succession back from the apostolic days. As Tertullian said around 200 A.D.:

"[L]et them show the origins of their Churches, let them unroll the order of their bishops, running down in succession from the beginning, so that their first bishop shall have for author and predecessor some one of the Apostles or of the apostolic men who continued steadfast with the Apostles. For this is the way in which the apostolic Churches transmit their lists: like the Church of the Smyrnaeans, which records that Polycarp was placed there by John; like the Church of the Romans where Clement was ordained by Peter. In just this same way the other Churches display those whom they have as sprouts from the apostolic seed, having been established in the episcopate by the Apostles. Let the heretics invent something like it. After their blasphemies, what could be unlawful for them? But even if they should contrive it, they will accomplish nothing; for their doctrine itself when compared with that of the Apostles, will show by its own diversity and contrariety that it has for its author neither an Apostle nor an apostolic man. The Apostles would not have differed among themselves in teaching, nor would an apostolic man have taught contrary to the Apostles, unless those who were taught by the apostles then preached otherwise. Therefore, they will be challenged to meet this test even by those Churches which are of much later date - for they are being established daily - and whose founder is not from among the Apostles nor from among the apostolic men; for those which agree in the same faith are reckoned as apostolic on account of the blood ties with their doctrine. Then let all heresies prove how they regard themselves as apostolic, when they are challenged by our Churches to meet either test. But in fact they are not apostolic, nor can they prove themselves to be what they are not. Neither are they received in peace in communion by the Churches which are in any way apostolic, since on account of their diverse beliefs they are in no way apostolic." [Tertullian ("an excellent early Christian writer" - although he would ultimately fall into heresy), c. 200 A.D.]

Remember further that Apostolic succession of bishops has always been considered a criterion of truth. As the Catechism of the Council of Trent states, "That all, therefore, might know which was the Catholic Church, the Fathers, guided by the Spirit of God, added to the Creed the word Apostolic. For the Holy Ghost, who presides over the Church, governs her by no other ministers than those of Apostolic succession. This Spirit, first imparted to the Apostles, has by the infinite goodness of God always continued in the [Catholic] Church." Where is your apostolic succession?

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